

CYA

California Youth Authority

Delinquency Prevention Division
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Today

More Than 50 Years of Service to the People of California

Director's Message: Community-Based Programs a Necessity

In last year's Delinquency Prevention Edition of *CYA Today*, we acknowledged and celebrated the success stories of parolees, wards and at-risk youth in California communities. It seems only appropriate that this year's edition focus on the individuals and agencies that assist youth in obtaining success and avoiding the gang violence that is so prevalent in our communities.

Although it is not widely known or publicized, the California Youth Authority's Delinquency Prevention Division has provided grant funding to several community-based delinquency prevention programs throughout the state since the 1980s. These programs include the Gang Violence Reduction Project, and a number of youth shelters and youth centers that indirectly target the reduction of gang involvement and violence. Many of the programs provide essential services to at-risk youth who ordinarily would not receive them. For example, the centers provide educational assistance, arts enrichment programs, conflict



Jerry L. Harper
Director

resolution, counseling, and mentoring programs. Like the California Youth Authority, these programs strive to create an environment that encourages the desire for more meaningful and productive lives rather than contributing to the violence around them.

As I review the articles and testimonials for this issue of *CYA Today*, a clear goal emerges in the work of the California Youth Authority and community-based agencies. We are all working to educate and inspire our youth to make positive choices for themselves and the communities where they reside. I am encouraged by the devotion of so many who have dedicated their lives to the betterment of our youth. I hope you are equally encouraged and will join me in celebrating the work of these individuals and agencies.

Likewise, it is equally important that we reflect and celebrate the work that we do within the California Youth Authority to treat wards and reduce gang violence, better our communities, and enhance the lives of our youth.

Gang Violence Reduction Project Improves Quality of Life in Tulare

By Carla D. Calhoun

Resource Development Director

Community Services and Employment Training, Inc.

The challenges faced by Tulare County residents may seem overwhelming. This rural, agricultural area endures pervasive poverty, extremely high unemployment, little funding for community improvements and the constant

insurgence of gangs from urban centers to the north and south. These are just a few of the complex issues that undermine quality of life for all who live here. Many of these challenges are interrelated and require comprehensive approaches.

The California Youth Authority's Gang Violence Reduction Project (GVRP), having awarded our program \$764,250, has provided just such a model through local multi-disciplinary partnerships and five components: gang mediation, alternative activities, victim awareness, information sharing and community service.

Community service has been an integral component of the Gang Violence Reduction

(Please see **Tulare County**, Page 7)



OPVS Works Toward Department-wide Gang Approach

By Kimberly Bushard

Delinquency Prevention Supervisor

The primary responsibility of the Youth Authority is to protect the public by providing training, treatment, and educational services to youthful offenders so they develop the life skills necessary to become productive citizens. Unfortunately, the level of violence perpetrated by wards who continue their gang allegiances, and the prevalence of gang activity by parolees, jeopardize safety within the institutional setting and in our communities.

Approximately seventy-five percent of Youth Authority wards have identified gang affiliations. Departmental data from the past year indicate these gang members instigate as many as 200 serious incidents within Youth Authority institutions each month.

Over the years, the Department has implemented various programs and services aimed at addressing gang issues, including:

- Gang Violence Reduction Project (GVRP)
- Institutional Gang Information Coordinators
- Gang Services Project
- Gang Information and Apprehension Units
- Tattoo Removal
- Mentoring Services

Although these programs are beneficial, the increased sophistication of criminal street gangs has taxed the Department's ability to respond to dynamic and complex safety and social issues. Consequently, the Department is taking action to improve its gang services. While GVRP has historically been focused on providing gang prevention and intervention services at the local level through local law enforcement and community-based organizations, little has been done to consistently and systematically provide similar services to the Youth Authority population. As a result, the Department now finds itself facing a growing number of gang-entrenched wards – and, in turn, parolees – who are recruiting other gang members from within our population and inciting an increasing number of violent acts against wards and staff. In an effort to deal more effectively with the population for which it is primarily responsible, the Department is partially redirecting its efforts away from community-based programs in order to improve and strengthen gang services provided to wards and parolees.

(Please see **OPVS**, Page 7)



Vicky Chavez (l), a 14-year old 8th grader at Divisadero Middle School in Visalia, and her 18-year old sister, Mayra (who is working on her high school diploma through adult school), participate on a graffiti removal project.

Photo courtesy of Michael J. Bowen

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‘Get Real’ Forum Gets Teens Talking About Issues

By Katherine Morris (with permission to reprint by
The Register-Pajaronian, May 31, 2003)

Editor's Note: The California Youth Authority's Office of Prevention and Victims Services awarded \$750,000 in Proposition 86 funds to support the Watsonville Youth Center who co-sponsored this event.

Local Youth Gather to Discuss Gangs and Teen Pregnancy

It doesn't matter what you've done in the past, but rather what you will do in the future. That was the message woven throughout "Get Real," a special community forum Thursday evening on two of the most pressing issues affecting Watsonville youth - gang violence and teen pregnancy.

More than 60 people - mostly Watsonville teens - crammed into a room at the G.H.W.R. Youth Center for the event, which was hosted by Central Coast Public Radio KUSP-FM, the Watsonville Youth Center and the YWCA.

"We're here tonight to answer your questions as well as listen to what you've got to say," said Gina Castaneda of Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, Inc. Castaneda sat on a panel of speakers that included Jorge Sanchez of Si Se Puede, O.T. Quintero of Barrios Unidos, Watsonville Police officer Jorge Zamora, Sgt. Henry Montez of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and an ex-gang member turned gang activist, identified as Miguel.

"How do you break the cycle and avoid gangs if you've already got family members that are involved?" one audience member asked. "It's not easy," Castaneda said, who had several family members involved in gangs. "I was homeless at 14, on the streets trying to find myself. But I stayed in school and I played sports." Castaneda said she broke the cycle of violence with support from her teachers, coaches and friends. "I would look at my older brothers and what they were going through, see them strung out on drugs and know that I didn't want to end up like that," she said. Officer Zamora said he had a similar experience.

"It's hard when your family is involved, because you're already labeled by others," Zamora said. "You've just got to find ways to avoid it. Find something that you like to do and stick with it. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something or put you down." "Sure, when I was growing up it was tough because a lot of my friends in gangs had money and guns and

nice cars," Zamora added. "But now, I've got money and a gun and a nice car, and it's all legal." Some of the most powerful moments of the evening came when ex-gang members sitting in the audience took to the microphone to tell their stories and offer a few scraps of advice.

"If it weren't for my child being born, I'd probably still be doing the same things I was doing before," said Miguel, who said he first got tangled up in the web of gangs and drugs at age 11. "Seeing your child come out of your wife's womb - it brings out a new side of yourself and gives you a warm feeling. It helped me get out to know that I was doing it for someone else, too." A soft-spoken young man in the audience, identified as Jose, credited community resources such as Si Se Puede for helping to put gang life behind him. "When I left that program, I had learned all of these tools," Jose said. "Now, I'm trying to pass on all of those tools to my younger brother, so he doesn't have to go through what I went through. I'm trying to be a role model for him." A couple of audience members expressed their frustrations with "the system" - police officers, the courts and prison. "We have problems all of the time in my neighborhood with gang members coming in and starting fights with my family - even at peaceful barbecues," said one man. "And every time it happens we call the police and they come and take a report, but nothing ever changes. One time, a cop watched my cousin get hit over the head with a bottle and did nothing to stop it. He didn't arrest the guys who did it, either." Officer Zamora said he thought that particular officer's actions were "totally wrong" and hoped he wasn't working for the department anymore, if that was the case. "At the same time, it's frustrating for us because many times we get called out to these situations and the victim doesn't want to press charges or testify in court," Zamora said. "Therefore, we can't fix the problem. We need your help to fight this problem. We need to find ways to work together and I think that's why we're all here tonight." As the gang portion of the forum drew to a close, Quintero urged audience members to get involved in groups and activities and to embrace their "cultura" or culture. "Culture cures," he said. "Because how can you know where you're going if you don't even really know where you're from?"

"Get Real" was broadcast to the public on June 22, 2003, at 7 p.m. on KUSP 88.9FM as part of "Youthtopia." ©Register-Pajaronian 2003



Call for Gang Coordination

By Larry Miranda
Youth Authority Gang Coordinator

In an effort to address the gang-related activities within our facilities, the Director identified a critical need to reorganize, standardize and revitalize the Department's Gang Network. The Gang Network includes both Parole Services and Community Corrections Branch and the Institutions and Camps Branch. The Gang Network plays a vital role in the safety and security of staff and wards through the identification of gang members and through the dissemination of gang intelligence to staff and outside law enforcement agencies.

During the last year and a half, the Institutional Gang Coordinators have played a vital role in revising our Department's gang validation process, gang information in WIN Exchange and the implementation of the Department's standardized gang files.

My role as the Departmental Gang Coordinator is to administer and facilitate this kind of communication. The Director has assigned this task, not only to attack the gang issues that permeate our institutions and communities, but also to explore new programs. These programs would begin at the Reception Centers and continue at other program institutions to encourage the dissociation of gang membership through intervention and prevention.

The Department is currently reviewing several intervention programs -- for example, a 12-step program at Mule Creek State Prison. This program consists of 12-step principles and has formed a community-based agency called "Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous." Lastly, I would like to recognize the Gang Coordinators, Paul Jablonsky, Reggie Watkins, OPVS staff, Sue

(Please see Gang Coordination, Page 7)

Stepping Up To Challenges: Perspectives of a Delinquency Prevention Specialist

By Bernard Norris
Delinquency Prevention Specialist

Since high school, I've desired to work with youth in order to help them through difficult times. My Youth Authority career has certainly given me the opportunity to do just that!

In my 13 years as a field parole agent (serving San Francisco, Santa Clara, Marin and, most recently, San Mateo counties), I felt strongly that my work and case management style were positive and effective in helping parolees bring about positive change in their lives. I received great satisfaction in being what I titled myself to be, "a change broker." However, I reached a point where I was in need of occupational change. As fate would have it, a co-worker suggested that I apply for a vacant position with the Office of Prevention and Victims Services (OPVS) assigned to work in the Bay Area. Given my experience and knowledge of the area, this sounded like a good fit... and here I am!



*Delinquency Prevention Specialist
Bernard Norris*

(Please see Perspectives, Page 7)

Did You Know...?

**The California Department of Justice estimates
that there could be as many as
300,000 gang members in this state.**

Coachella Valley Boys and Girls Club Offers a Positive Space to Grow

(Editor's Note: The Coachella Valley Boys and Girls Club was awarded \$1,230,413 from AB 2796 to construct the facility and an additional Family Resource Center. They provide recreational and educational activities and were awarded Project of the Year in 2002 from the City of Coachella. Following are comments from two Coachella Valley Boys and Girls Club members.)

Jose

The Boys and Girls Club means everything to me. I always ask myself, “Where would I be if the Club wasn’t here?” I ask myself that question because I was a troubled kid growing up. I was doing stuff with my friends; stuff that we weren’t supposed to be doing. For example, my friends and I would throw things at cars that were passing by. The only reason we were doing these things is because we had nothing better to do. That’s when I was introduced to the Boys and Girls Club. A couple of Club staff members went to my school and told us about it. Right away, I was interested. I became a member when I was in the fourth grade. Now, I’m going on to college and I’m proud to say that I’ve been a member ever since.

The Boys and Girls Club has kept me out of trouble. They keep me out of trouble by keeping me busy with all the activities that the Club has to offer. The Club has kept me out of the streets. They helped me stay away from joining a gang and from drugs. I’m really grateful to the Club for that because I see some of my old friends and they aren’t doing so well. Some of them didn’t even graduate.

The Boys and Girls Club has always been like a father figure to me. I grew up without a father, so the Club has helped me guide my life in the right direction. The Club has just always been here for me. That’s why the Boys and Girls Club means the world to me. I plan to keep the Club as a part of my life.

Johnny

The Club has helped me accomplish goals that I thought were impossible to achieve. From school to my personal life to the Club, the Boy and Girls Club has always been there for me. Through the good times or bad times, it has helped me build self-esteem within myself when I didn’t have any and it also helped me become a leader instead of a follower. The Club has helped me in more ways than one.

One of the main goals the Club helped me with was high school graduation – a goal I thought was impossible because of the grades I was getting. The Club made me concentrate on school. It helped me get into summer



A Boys and Girls Club sign on the road outside the city of Coachella reminds parents of their responsibility to know the whereabouts of their children.

league basketball for my school, which allowed me to go to summer school and raise my grades. Every day after school before I could do anything else, I had to do my homework and study those subjects I wasn’t doing well in. If it weren’t for the Club, I would have never graduated.

Another way the Club has helped me is by getting me involved. When I first entered the Club, I was a scared little boy who only went to the Club because my older brother went. My Club Advisor, Juanita Godwin, got me involved in Torch Club, which is a leadership group that prepares you for teen leadership group, Keystone. This involvement helped me become a leader and got me to be outspoken. I love the Club for everything it has done for me. Being a member at the Club is unlike anything else. Everyone cares for one another just like a family does. To me, Juanita is like a second Mom. I have so much respect for her and for what she has done for me. We live in a rough neighborhood, and it’s hard to say no to the bad things in life. But with the support of the Boys and Girls Club, it’s much easier to say “no.”

Rising to the Occasion: National Youth Summit a Success

By Suzanne Neuhaus, Delinquency Prevention Specialist and Walter Hsaio, Community Leader

Over the last 30 years, public frustration with crime, the fear of recent increases in youth violence, and the racial and behavioral characteristics of many serious and violent youthful offenders have caused a penological shift—from restorative to retributive—among voters and lawmakers. Consequently, legislation has de-emphasized age consideration and rehabilitation in exchange for punitive accountability of young offenders, according to the seriousness of the crime. People and politicians have increasingly viewed the court’s traditional commitment towards rehabilitation as an act of leniency, rather than a means to protect the public and exact justice for the victim. In response to this statutory shift in emphasis from rehabilitation to retribution, many community-based coalitions have formed to educate the public on the forgotten merits of restorative justice.

Each year, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) sponsors a “National Youth Summit on Preventing Violence” for youth from across the nation and abroad. Partnering with several national youth-serving organizations, NCPC has been a leader in the youth crime prevention arena for over 20 years. The mission of the four-day summit is to shift the perception of youth as perpetrators of crime, to the reality that youth are a positive force for crime prevention through education and action.

As part of this year’s Youth Summit, held in Anaheim, California, the Youth Authority was asked to facilitate a 3 ½-hour Mega Session on Restorative Justice for approximately 100 youth participants and youth leaders on the final day of the summit, Feb. 17, 2003. In preparation for the Summit, Delinquency Prevention Specialists Suzanne Neuhaus and Kelly Perdue, and Artist Facilitator Shelly Wood, worked with parole staff to select a group of 15 active and discharged parolees to serve as community leaders during the session.

The group met on two separate occasions to develop the session and participate in training to assist them in becoming group facilitators, many of whom had never encountered a situation that tested their resolve, called upon their leadership qualities, and asked them to be vulnerable at the same time.

The role of the leaders was to present two case scenarios involving youthful offenders responsible for serious and violent crimes to each group and facilitate a group discussion, at the conclusion of which the group would reach consensus on a disposition in each case. They were required to consider the needs of the victim, the community, and the offender in drawing their



Participants at the National Youth Summit on Preventing Violence held in Anaheim in February 2003.

conclusions, consistent with a balanced and restorative approach to justice. The deliberation was heated, as group members struggled with issues of age, legality, and justice.

At the conclusion of the group work, four community leaders were invited to share their story, as it related to the choices that resulted in their commitment to the Youth Authority, and the decisions they have made since to re-direct the course of their lives. Prior to that, their “felony parolee”
(Please see Youth Summit, Page 7)

Did You Know...?

Between 1996 and 2001, the rate of juvenile felony arrests in California decreased 33.5 percent, compared to an 11.8 percent decrease in the rate of adult felony arrests. Over the same time period, the rate of juvenile arrests for homicide offenses plunged 55.8 percent, compared to a 29.6 percent decrease in the rate of adult homicide arrests. Nonetheless, in 2001, juvenile arrests accounted for 11.1 percent of all felony homicide arrests.

(Crime and Delinquency in California, California Department of Justice, 2001)

Oakland's Youth Employment Partnership: Achieving a Gang Neutral Center

By Jessica Wickens
Administrator, Youth Employment Partnership

The Youth Employment Partnership (YEP), Inc. has been operating job-training programs for at-risk youth in Oakland since 1973. Nearly three years ago, with a \$1,290,046 grant from AB 2796 funds administered by the California Youth Authority, and additional help of a local business, YEP purchased a building in Oakland's San Antonio district. This building is used as the agency's administrative offices and its training facilities. It occupies the bulk of a main intersection of the 23rd Avenue corridor – an area that is the focus of many local efforts to address problems of drugs, gangs, economic depression and other urban challenges. YEP serves at-risk, low-income youth from all of Oakland, but our focus in the neighborhood is to further develop our building into a centrally-located Youth Center - a safe, neutral place for youth and a site of community interest and pride.

Diversion from Gang Activity: Our job training programs serve youth and young adults ages 14 – 24 and are designed to provide youth with employability skills, educational support and meaningful employment experiences. Particularly for younger youth, an internship subsidized by YEP, in conjunction with participation in career exploration and job readiness workshops, is often the first exposure to the world of work. It therefore provides, for many, an introduction to a legitimate means of making a living and moving out of poverty. One YEP training program called Team Oakland employs high school students to work on urban beautification and litter abatement projects while offering environmental education and career-related training. A survey of the 2002 participants found that 86% of the youth felt the program prepared them for finding a job, while 68% said that it helped them decide to go to college.

Graffiti: Gang-related graffiti and other graffiti in or on the building are promptly removed, either by YEP staff and trainees or through the help of city graffiti abatement programs. This helps to establish YEP as a zone of no tolerance for gang expression or activity. YEP clients who are gang members are discouraged from using the building to express that identity.

Community Involvement: YEP has opened up the building to use by the local community for meetings, concerts, art exhibits and other events, which has helped to establish community identity and pride in the Youth Center. This tends both to diminish focus on the building as turf and provide safe



De'jon Banks, a youth at Oakland's Youth Employment Partnership, participates in a job training program.

alternative activities for youth and the general community. During August and September, YEP hosted a community art exhibit, funded by the City of Oakland. A local painter created twenty portraits of diverse women from Oakland and interviewed them about their lives. These paintings were on display around the building as well as in the windows, which drew many people from the street to stroll through the building and inquire about the artwork and about YEP's programs.

This year, YEP is undertaking an extensive renovation in partnership with the Alameda County Department of Education, who will occupy a portion of our building for their high school for pregnant and parenting teens. This renovation will improve the facade and provide increased classroom and office space for our programs, our new Charter School (to open fall 2004), the Alameda County High School and for other community activities. We look forward to continuing the development of this Youth Center for the education and development of Oakland youth.

DeWitt Nelson Wards Give At-Risk Youth Another Chance

By Harvey Casillas
Delinquency Prevention Specialist

"You're lucky to be here," says Mathew. "When I was your age, I didn't have a program like this or an opportunity for people to talk to me about my behavior. If I did, maybe I wouldn't be here tonight talking to you. Listen to what we have to say or you might end up like me."

Mathew is one of many wards from Dewitt Nelson Youth Correctional Facility who speak at local schools, youth centers, and delinquency prevention programs. The presentations differ from individual testimonies, but the message remains the same. Listen to your parents, stay in school, and do what's right! If not, you could end up in one of the California Youth Authority's (CYA) facilities.

Giving participants an idea of a typical day in CYA, Darius states, "You wake up at 6 a.m. every morning, go to school (even in the summer), go to groups or programs, shower, and go to bed. Man, I'm 20 years old and I have to go to sleep at 10 p.m. every night, even on the weekends. Speaking of weekends, if you're lucky you'll get a short visit. When you get to watch TV, you watch what everyone (50 wards) wants to watch. It's no joke!"

OPVS' Delinquency Prevention Division (DPD) has participated in such presentations. Recently, we have established a partnership with the Ceres Police Department's CHOICES Program. The program is designed to give youth an intense, but comprehensive, look at the juvenile justice system and divert them from an already overcrowded system.

The purpose of the CHOICES Program is to expose youth to real life

situations in a practical atmosphere, and educate them on how their own choices can change their lives. Youth between the ages of 10-17 are referred from police, school, diversion boards, probation and parents to participate in the seven-week program. While in the program, they will listen to a series of realistic, straightforward presentations made by a team of law enforcement personnel (CYA included), community-based programs, and various organizations.

The DPD continues to express the CYA's commitment to working closely with law enforcement, the courts, probation, and a broad spectrum of public and private agencies concerned and involved with at-risk youth. Public Service is one of the best ways the CYA can help restore the community and, at the same time, meet the requirements of the Department's public service hours for wards and parolees.



DeWitt Nelson wards following an anti-gang presentation at the Ceres Police Department.

Did You Know...?

In 2001, the crime rate for battery reached its highest levels ever in California public schools, increasing by 18% over the previous year. Battery is now the most frequently reported crime on both high school and middle school campuses.

(California Safe Schools Assessment, California Department of Education, 2001)

Mexican American Community Services Agency: Building the Future, One Kid at a Time

Since 1964, the Mexican American Community Services Agency (MACSA) has provided accessible, culturally appropriate, quality programs for youth, families and seniors of Santa Clara County. All programs and services are designed to systematically empower and educate participants to become healthy, self-sufficient, positive community members. MACSA's 24,000 sq. ft. youth center offers services in the areas of education, recreation, counseling, gang prevention/intervention, arts, day care, and health care services. The youth center also provides daily after school programs in academic tutoring, leadership development, life skills education, computer literacy, and arts programs. In 1990, the California Youth Authority played a part in making this youth center a reality when it awarded \$1 million out of the Youth Center/Youth Shelter Bond Act of 1988 for construction of the facility.

MACSA's youth center is located in the heart of Eastside San Jose, Mayfair neighborhood. It is estimated that more than 20 gangs exist within the one-mile radius that comprises the Mayfair neighborhood. It is further estimated that there are more than 200 gangs in the city of San Jose. Indeed, gangs continue to be a huge problem, infusing communities with drugs, alcohol and violence. But with the support of valuable community programs, more and more youth are being impacted and giving up the gang lifestyle.

MACSA offers an array of programs for gang-involved youth, including the following:

Street Reach Project serves youth between the ages of 14-21 through a comprehensive 10-phase strategy designed to deter them from unhealthy lifestyles with a goal of becoming productive members of society.

Male Involvement Program focuses on teenage pregnancy prevention, responsible fatherhood, and personal and academic development. This program is intended to teach youth 12-25 years of age, the skills necessary to make wise and responsible decisions. This program received national recognition by the National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy.

Life Skills Program serves incarcerated, gang-involved youth through an innovative and comprehensive personal development curriculum. Participants learn about the detrimental consequences of gang involvement, substance abuse, violence, and a lack of personal and professional goals.

Restorative Justice Program, in collaboration with Santa Clara County Probation Department, offers first-time youthful offenders an opportunity to "make amends" for their crime without having to go through the legal system. Through this program, cases are heard by the Neighborhood Accountability Board and recommendations for restorative action are made.

Do these programs work? Jaime and Bertha think so!

In 2001, Jaime came to MACSA through the **Street Reach Project**. At that time, Jaime was a 19-year-old father dealing with serious issues revolving
(Please see MACSA, Page 8)



Sanctuary Youth Center Helps Bring Positive Camp Experience to Fresno Inner City Kids



The Sanctuary Youth Shelter/Center (directed by the Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission) recently partnered with PG&E, local businesses and law-enforcement agencies to sponsor a 5-day camp for 50 youth, ages 8-12 years, living in downtown Fresno. The camp provided 50 "mentors" to link with the young people, 30 of whom were college students from CSU Fresno.

The mentors focused some discussions around the negative influence and destructive aspects of gang involvement. Some campers have

older siblings (and other family members) in gangs and the camp experience provided an avenue for interaction and connection with good role models, positive social activities, and how to access neighborhood services. Further, it provided a temporary safe place away from the drugs, violence, and drive-by shootings that plague their neighborhoods. The campers were able to share with the camp leaders their hopes and dreams, which, with positive direction and support, are a way out of gang life.

For most of the mentors, the five days spent

with these kids taught what no book could possibly offer. Thomas Knight, a Fresno State senior said, "I had no clue that these kids lived under these extreme conditions. Most adults would have given up by now, but these kids kept bouncing back. I was completely amazed by their resilience."

All the campers were fingerprinted and photographed by the Fresno County Sheriff's Department in response to a growing number of child predators living in the downtown Fresno area. The
(Please see Sanctuary, Page 7)

Alternative to the Streets--San Diego's Storefront Drop-In Center

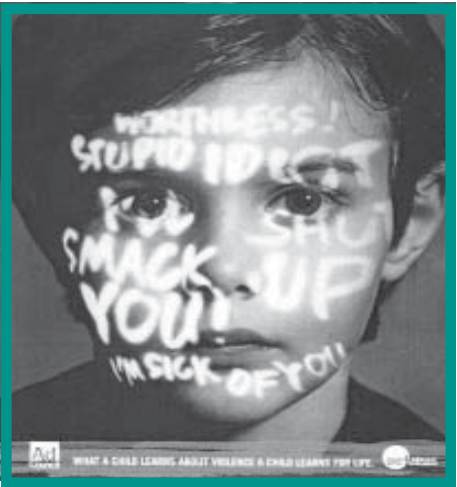
By Jan Stankus
Director, Storefront Drop-In Center

San Diego Youth and Community Service's Storefront Drop-in Center, funded by a \$757,125 grant from the California Youth Authority, has been a healthy alternative to street life for homeless youth and an alternative for youth who are pressured into engaging in gang activities.

The Drop-in Center, which is located in the Hillcrest area of San Diego, provides a safe option to youth ages 12-18. With hours that are youth friendly, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, the center offers a wide variety of activities and services. Any youth who enters the center finds a warm, friendly and diverse staff. The atmosphere, complete with pool table, Sony Play Station II, table games, computer lab with Internet access, an entertainment center, and educational library, also offers a full component of case management services.

The service delivery system is geared toward providing a full array of options to youth. Case management includes an Independent Living Skills component, an on-site health clinic, direct referrals for dental and vision care, and a collaborative relationship with Monarch High School, a school operated by the San Diego County Office of Education, that works individually with youth who may be homeless or transitioning off the streets.

It is known that the hours between 2 and 7 p.m. are critical to youth who are at risk for gang and street activities. Consequently, youth focus groups were held this summer to determine which activities would be popular for an after school activity program. With feedback from the Drop-in Center youth and funding from *PhotoCharity*, a varied and exciting program is developing



that will include classes in Hip-Hop dancing, play writing, basketball instruction, computer programming, guitar lessons, swimming, hiking, rock climbing and, hopefully, a winter snowboarding trip.

Although recreational activities are a large component of the Drop-in Center, the youth also requested tutors/mentors to assist them in their academics and preparation for the SAT, ASVAB and GED. We expect to have a mentoring program, with an emphasis on tutoring and academics, in place by the end of the fall.

This past year the Drop-in Center Independent Living Skills program was instrumental in assisting three young men in graduating from high school and maintaining another youth in the international baccalaureate program, an academically accelerated program for gifted youth. The Drop-in Center staff, like proud parents, cooed over senior class and prom pictures, attended band recitals, youth soccer games, boarded a youth on a bus for a tour of California colleges, worried over the results of SAT exams and applications for scholarships, and watched proudly as one of our youth, who was class valedictorian, gave his commencement speech!

Other activities offered at the Drop-in Center are boys groups, girls groups, HIV/STD health education, Independent Living Skills group, alcohol and drug groups, gang intervention groups, and individual counseling with a licensed therapist.

The Drop-in Center is a positive, safe and FUN alternative to street life. Since opening its doors in December of 2001 it has served more than 300 youth, once again demonstrating that prevention programs are an effective option to youth at risk.

Did You Know...?

In Los Angeles County in 2000, 41.8 percent of all reported homicides were gang-related. The percentage of gang-related homicides more than doubled from 1980-2000.

(Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department)

The Greatest Battle Loss

By Cathy Ann Intemann
Delinquency Prevention Analyst

One is taken immediately by the mere largeness of his presence, accompanied by his ornate and colorful walking stick and his partner of over thirty years, Tina. Similar to his namesake, Confederate General Robert E. Lee, Rev. Lee was born a winner (excelled in athletics at Carver High), identified himself as a an upright soldier (a Crip, always going down with the “homies”) and yet now, can teach us the lessons of the greatest battle loss –the gang-related deaths of his two sons, students of his own gangster teaching.

“I remember driving one day with my boys when they were small. I saw a homie on the side of the road getting into it with someone. I pulled the car over and got out.... my boys said, ‘what are you doing Daddy?’ I taught them right there that you always go down with your homies.”

Robert grew up in Compton, California in the early 1960’s and was recruited by colleges for athletic scholarships. Having fatherhood come sooner than planned, he got a “square job” at a foundry. Soon he started seeing friends in Cadillacs and was drawn to the lifestyle of selling drugs and recruiting kids to the Crips that were taking hold in L.A. neighborhoods.

Tina spent her first few years in the deep South where she learned to defer to white people during the tumultuous times of the civil rights movement. When she moved to Los Angeles, her mother taught her quickly that she would have to learn to fight. The excitement of Robert’s lifestyle drew her to their relationship. Having struggled with her own ability to communicate positively, Tina, a large eyed woman, states, “I had to learn how to



*Rev. Robert and Tina Lee of
“Minister Against Drugs and Violence.”*

negotiate; I had to lose jobs.”

“I see kids all the time having to fend for themselves. Sometimes they have parents on drugs or sometimes their parents have to work all the time.”

Robert and Tina feel strongly about literacy and self-respect. Robert believes in the holistic approach to services or “wraparound,” where services are provided in collaboration with the community, schools, churches and law enforcement agencies.

“People learn best from what they are comfortable,” Robert states with the confidence of having walked in the same shoes. “What vehicle do they have (to succeed)...rap music, selling drugs?? Literacy is the key.”

The death of his twin sons two years apart was sorrowful, yet presented opportunity for change. While selling crack on a Sacramento street, Robert noticed a friend shining up his shoes and wearing a more attractive shirt than usual. He accepted his invitation to a church revival. That August day in 1987 changed his life.

Rev. Lee learned to read in a church-sponsored program and went on to be trained in a program called “Goal Directed Behavior,” which assists others in the reasoning process. The program, which Tina needed convincing to participate in, is now being taught enthusiastically by both of them at several locations in Sacramento and the outlying areas. The Lees spend Friday nights at Auburn Juvenile Hall, facilitate weekly gang prevention groups at the Woodland Probation Office, and have created an after school program at the Day Reporting Center for Probationers in South Sacramento. The United Way funds “Minister Against Drugs and Violence,” the business the Lees incorporated in 1992. Additionally they have spoken before California Youth Authority audiences at the Preston and Karl Holton Youth Correctional Facilities.

It is said that when the Confederate Army was at the hands of defeat, men with smoldering eyes turned to General Lee begging him to continue the battle. General Lee shook his head at those men and said, “Abandon your animosities and make your sons Americans.” General Lee yielded to peace for the sake of freedom, as do Rev. and Tina Lee in the purposeful work they do in our community. We applaud their work.

Rev. Robert E. Lee can be contacted at (916) 921-2390 or elderlee@pacbell.net

Laser Tattoo Removal Machines Transferred to Community Programs

By George Kostyrko
Assistant Director, Communications

Earlier this year, the CYA formally transferred ownership of the laser tattoo removal machines to five community programs that have been using them since the machines were installed in 1998. A sixth machine was placed at El Paso de Robles Youth Correctional Facility. The machines were put into place by CYA, in accordance with Senate Bill 526 (Hayden) in 1997 and Senate Bill 1700 (Hayden).

Since that time, thousands of tattoos have been removed from individuals, including CYA parolees, who wanted to sever gang ties and/or enhance their employment and educational opportunities.

Although CYA no longer owns the machines, the CYA will continue to make referrals as necessary. Recipient agencies of these machines include the Hollywood/Sunset Free Clinic; Orange County Probation Department; Family Health Centers of San Diego; Alameda County Public Health Department and the Dominican Hospital of Santa Cruz.

In addition, a statewide resource listing of tattoo removal programs was developed and is accessible on the CYA’s website at: www.cya.ca.gov/juvenile/tattooremoval.html.

Kelly Perdue, Parole Agent II and Delinquency Prevention Specialist noted that since 1998, some 2,676 tattoos have been completely removed from clients – many of whom came from, or were referred by, CYA institutions and parole offices. Considering tattoo removal can often require a dozen or more visits to the laser tattoo removal equipment, these machines were used frequently.

The CYA was recognized by the Hollywood/Sunset Free Clinic Board of Directors May 1, 2003, and received a community service award for its generous service to Los Angeles County. Perdue accepted the award on behalf of the CYA.

“The continuum of care is so important, especially with these kids,” Perdue said, recalling his comments to the attendees at the awards event. “These kids are targeted by these tattoos, when others can see them on their necks and hands. Potential employers recognize it as problematic for them as well – they just don’t want problems.”

Theresa Padua, Executive Director for the Hollywood Free Clinic, noted that access to that machine in her community has allowed many former gang members to transition to professional jobs without ink that betrays a gang-related past.

“I could not possibly put it into words, it has been so invaluable,” Padua said. “We have given thousands of treatments, and the clients are so grateful that they are able to start new lives.”



Inland Parole Office parolee Dominic Munro speaks to a class at Shivela Middle School on substance abuse awareness.

Parolees Speak to School-Age Kids

By Suzanne Neuhaus
Delinquency Prevention Specialist

Each year in December, the Delinquency Prevention staff facilitates a class on Substance Abuse Awareness for the entire eighth grade class at Shivela Middle School in the City of Murietta. Teacher Julia Redfield coordinates the program each year at the conclusion of their required drug education unit, and the response from both students and faculty has been outstanding. Each year, a parolee speaker is invited from the Inland Parole Office to share his or her personal life experiences as they relate to drugs and drug use.

This year, Dominic Muro agreed to participate as a guest speaker. The program was 50-minutes in length and I began it with a brief introduction. Dominic spoke for approximately 30 minutes, and then addressed questions posed by the student audience--a lively and inquisitive bunch. The presentation was then repeated for an additional five times to a collective audience of approximately 600 eighth-grade students. Dominic’s presentation style is confrontational, candid and direct. He exercises good group control and presents a positive attitude. In recognition of a job well done, Dominic received several hundred “thank-you” letters acknowledging the impact his presentation had on the student participants. Many students disclosed their own personal experiences in their letters, and they were confronted and empowered by Dominic’s message of personal responsibility and accountability.

In July, Dominic was invited to speak at Jurupa Valley High School in the City of Mira Loma, and again the success of his presentation made a huge impact. According to tenured teacher Dr. William Pine, seldom has “a 90-minute session captivated an audience like this one did...students were totally focused on their messages of choices and consequences, taking responsibility for their actions, staying in school, and planning for a productive future.”

Perspectives... (From Page 2)

I started my new position as a Parole Agent Specialist at OPVS in December 2002. So far, this has been a great move and experience. The position allows me the opportunity to get out into the Bay Area communities and work with the positive delinquency prevention programs the Youth Authority helped create. Through this work, I have met many highly dedicated delinquency prevention workers who have committed themselves to working to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system. Youth centers and shelters, funded in part by the Youth Authority, consistently provide kids with a safe place to go for help whether it be tutoring, counseling, employment skills training or just good recreational fun. Viewing these facilities and watching the kids actively involved in positive activities has heightened my awareness of the numerous and effective contributions of the Youth Authority to Northern California communities.

While working with parolees over the years, I understood the need for development of viable community resources which they could take advantage of to bring about positive change in their lives. In my current position, I am able to continue helping parolees by routinely seeking out community resources (e.g., tattoo removal programs, mentoring and family mediation) and making referrals. Through my new position at OPVS, I feel an ongoing connection with field parole work and am happy for the opportunity to assist, as I realize every little bit helps.

Although the adjustment to my new position has not been easy, given the tremendous differences in job responsibilities and activities, it has been a rewarding and challenging opportunity for growth. OPVS staff are highly dedicated – similar to the field parole agents I worked with – and I can truly say my current career choice has been most rewarding. Thanks to all of you whom I’ve had the opportunity to share it with!

Tulare... (From Page 1)

Project in Tulare County. Community Services and Employment Training, Inc. (C-SET), lead agency for Tulare County’s program, has found that children embrace the opportunity to improve their communities, and they inspire people of all ages to get involved. Children, seniors and families have worked together for as little as half a day to make a difference for hundreds of people, and the results are immediate. GVRP youth gain self-confidence and pride in their communities, and their communities become safer and vibrant places to live. These outcomes have served to keep youth out of gangs, and communities where residents are involved are less attractive to gangs.

C-SET integrates community service in its Jr. Leadership curriculum. GVRP participants become Jr. Leaders with the skills to analyze the needs of their communities and orchestrate community service projects. Youth-led projects in the GVRP communities of Linnell Farm Labor Center, Ivanhoe and Woodville have included planting trees in community parks, gathering donations and distributing food baskets to families in need, graffiti paint-outs, renovating murals that have been tagged by gang members, community clean-ups, movie nights and talent shows open to the entire community, and community-wide educational events. Jr. Leaders promote and operate all events as drug-, alcohol-, and violence-free activities.

Jr. Leaders are joined by GVRP staff members, including probation officers, court-ordered youth, and residents of all ages for graffiti paint-outs. Angel Avitia, C-SET’s Senior Program Coordinator at the Linnell Center, found that it is common for kids not in the program to turn out for such community service projects.

“Some kids just show up and help paint because it’s an opportunity to get together and do something fun,” said Avitia. “But they get something unexpected: It gives them a sense of respect for the neighborhood. It teaches them pride in the community when they see that a clean community looks better.”

In the past, Ivanhoe had a graffiti paint-out about once a year, while Woodville and the Linnell Center had none. Through GVRP, paint-outs expanded to at least three per year in each community and more often as needed.

“When people see graffiti, they think the community is gang-related,” shared Jose Rivera, a 14-year-old high school freshman in Visalia.

Mayra Chavez, 18, who lives at the Linnell Center, echoed Jose’s concern: “People think the community is dangerous when they see graffiti.”

Vicky Chavez, Mayra’s 14-year-old sister, added “When people see graffiti at the Farm Labor Center, they lower their opinion of the residents.”

Jr. Leaders in Woodville and the nearby Woodville Labor Camp have led six community service projects this year. Many of the projects provide learning opportunities in a variety of topics. For example, they learned about the importance of spaying and neutering pets while volunteering at the Tulare County animal control facility. More than 400 adults and youth gained valuable information during a Health and Safety Fair held in March. Jr. Leaders helped to assemble more than 20 agencies that provided information on their services.

“Hundreds took advantage of the services, which included diabetes and blood pressure checks, fire safety tips and pet care information,” stated Lily Rivera, C-SET’s Program Coordinator in Woodville. “It was a very rewarding experience for the kids and for me.”

Jr. Leaders of Ivanhoe assisted with a home and garden show to benefit FoodLink of Tulare County, a nonprofit food bank. The event gave students the opportunity to practice their communication skills as they presented information about FoodLink to the public. Ivanhoe Jr. Leaders also raised money to help the family of a fellow student who died in a car accident.

“Many of the students gain a new perspective on volunteering when they are involved in helping others,” said Sylvia Franco, C-SET’s Program Coordinator in Ivanhoe.

In October, Jr. Leaders will rally residents in all three communities to participate in Make A Difference Day, the largest community service effort in the nation. The youth are already planning projects for the Oct. 25 event. The impact of last year’s efforts is still evident. Jr. Leaders planted flowers and shrubs, painted picnic arbors, cleaned the streets of trash, repainted faded garbage bins, chopped weeds along roadways, removed graffiti and cleaned up yards for senior citizens.

The GVRP’s community service component has been an integral part of successfully keeping the participating youth from gang involvement. With each community service experience, these youth have discovered their individual strengths and learned to see the positive aspects of their community.

Youth Summit... (From Page 3)

status was protected, and they were introduced simply as community leaders.

In the end, Ms. Wood observed, “all the facilitators reintroduced themselves and their (the session participants) mouths dropped to the floor. Here they had thought they were working with people they felt were normal people like them, and they had done serious crimes and had rehabilitated themselves. It was extremely powerful and it was very real...not only did our facilitators change that day, but the participants changed as well. They had to look at things differently.”

The response to the session was tremendous and yielded a standing invitation to the Youth Authority to work with NCPC in the planning of future youth summits. In the words of NCPC Director Nicole Lester, “the lessons we provided will have a direct impact on the hundreds of lives that we inspired at the youth summit and an indirect impact on the thousands of people that they come into contact within their communities throughout the rest of their lives.” Our participation and enthusiasm was commended.

The community leaders selected to participate in the National Youth Summit on Preventing Violence included Dwayne H., Gabriel N., Sergio L., Tracey B., Tanner S., Joaquin L., Walter H., Gregory P., Ramses C., Jason C., Pyong “Steve” C., Armando L., Ignacio M., Johnny M., and David H. All were responsible for committing serious and violent offenses—today they are teachers, counselors, community outreach workers, college graduates, pastors, politicians, computer engineers, laborers, students, business owners, spouses and parents. Many Youth Authority staff contributed to our success at the summit, and are worthy of our gratitude: Deputy Parole Administrator Steve Aguilar, Supervising Parole Agent Lori Muir, Nelles Superintendent Vivian Crawford, Delinquency Prevention Supervisor Kim Bushard, Parole Agent II (Specialist) Chris Hillman, and Parole Agent I Marie Felix.

Gang Coordination... (From Page 2)

Easterwood, Wade Wayland, and John Prelip for their assistance in the development of the Gang Management Plan. It is hoped that with these efforts, we can create a safer environment for our staff, wards, and the community at large.

OPVS... (From Page 1)

Establishing a Departmental Gang Coordinator was the first step toward enhancing the Department’s efforts relative to gang members. The Departmental Gang Coordinator will work out of the Office of Prevention and Victims Services (OPVS) and assume lead responsibility for directing Department-wide efforts in the areas of prevention, intervention and suppression.

Given OPVS’ expanded role in gang services, some existing staff from the Delinquency Prevention Division will assume an active role in working on gang issues and servicing the gang population. This will entail working closely with the Departmental Gang Coordinator to address statewide gang policy and program needs, and participating in gang-related programming efforts in the institutions and parole offices. Within local communities, these staff will cultivate parolee resources and work with community-based organizations to create community service opportunities specifically tailored for these wards, i.e., emphasizing gang issues while reinforcing the positive learning that occurs through other aftercare components.

Sanctuary... (From Page 5)

campers were taught the correct responses when approached by a stranger, when to contact law-enforcement for emergencies, and encouraged to report all suspicious criminal behavior to an adult.

“The young campers got to connect with law-enforcement on an entire non-traditional level,” said Joe Martinez, Camp Sanctuary Coordinator. “Usually, law-enforcement’s role in the neighborhood involved an arrest of someone that was familiar to the child. Through this camp experience many of the negative stereotypes of police officers were shattered because of the positive interaction between the neighborhood kids and neighborhood cops.”

The Sanctuary Youth Shelter/Center was awarded \$742,765 in Proposition 86 funding administered by CYA. According to Lucianna Ventresca, Sanctuary Director, “the Sanctuary is the only youth shelter for runaway, homeless children in the entire Central California Valley, representing an area of 15,000 square miles. Since 1992, the Sanctuary has provided a safe place shelter for more than 11,000 children and incredibly has reunited more than 9,300 with their families.” If you would like more information on the EOC Sanctuary Safe Place Youth Shelter/Center, please call (559) 498-8543.

Did You Know...?

Teenagers are nearly five times more likely to be victims of crime than adults over age 35.

(Criminal Victimization 2001, National Crime Victimization Survey, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice)

Interview with Ex-Gang Members: Straight from the Source

By Harvey Casillas
Delinquency Prevention Specialist

In an effort to understand the gang lifestyle and reasons youth join gangs, we decided to tap into a valuable resource — our wards. We asked them to express their knowledge about gangs and gang activity, prevention, and tips for parents. Below is a series of questions that were asked, and responses made by former gang members in the California Youth Authority.

- Q. How did you get involved with a gang?**
A. Through family members, hanging out with older people and friends.

Q. Why did you join a gang?
A. To hang out with friends, to fit in and be a part of something.

Q. What do gangs represent/claim?
A. Turf, streets, colors, names. We have to protect the gang name and make a name for ourselves.

Q. How does a person join a gang?
A. They have to put in work. Like fight, steal, commit crimes, attack rival gang members, and sometimes get jumped in or fight their own gang members.

Q. Do gangs recruit members?
A. Yeah, by talking with the younger kids. They make them feel comfortable and tell them only the good stuff about gangs, such as, money, girls and having a good time. They'll also take them to parties. It's like selling a product, you tell them all the good stuff about the product.

Q. Is there an initiation process?
A. Yes, getting jumped in or fighting someone in the gang. Sometimes committing a crime.

Q. How do you get out of a gang?
A. Either by getting too old and having kids, or disassociating with the gang. But you'll probably have to move away.

Q. Who is typically the leader or shot caller of a gang?
A. Experience, age, and knowledge all have something to do with it. You have to be strong mentally and know your history about the gang.

Q. What activities are gang members involved with?
A. Selling drugs, stealing, fighting, vandalism, intimidation to make a name for themselves, partying, and wandering the streets looking for rival gang members.

- Q. How are street gangs different from prison gangs?**
A. Street gangs are not structured or organized, no set rules or regulations to follow. On the streets you just run your own. In here, we have to follow strict guidelines.

Q. Have you ever lost anyone close to you through gang violence?
A. Yeah, family members and homeboys. Even a girlfriend!

Q. How did you feel?
A. Angry!

Q. What did you do?
A. The homeboys got together to retaliate. If we couldn't get to the ones who did it, then we would go after their loved ones, such as family members and friends, and do something worse to them.

Q. What's the best way for parents to prevent their child from joining a gang?
A. Check out their friends and find out who they're hanging out with. Talk to them about gangs and tell them the bad stuff that happens. Get them involved with sports and things like the Boys and Girls Club.

Q. What should parents do if their child is involved with a gang?
A. Find diversion programs to take their kids to and get information about gangs and learn about them.

Q. What should the community do to prevent gangs or gang violence?
A. Get involved in the neighborhood, establish activities and programs for youth.

Q. What are your feelings about gangs?
A. I stopped gangbanging because it didn't make sense. I was tired of getting caught up for other people. I didn't even know why I was gangbanging. I ask others why they gangbang and they don't even know. They just say, "cause I want to." It's not organized. It's dumb.

Q. If you could do it over, would you do anything different?
A. Yeah, I would choose my friends and the people I hung out with differently. I would care more about my schooling and spend more time listening and being with my family. I probably wouldn't be locked up right now.

Q. One word to describe gangs...what's the first thing that comes to your mind?
A. NEGATIVE!

Internet Resources

The following websites can provide you with additional information regarding Gang Intervention and Violence Prevention.

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations
http://www.nagia.org/kids_and_gangs.htm

National Criminal Justice Reference Service
<http://www.ncjrs.org/gangs/facts.html>

California Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center
<http://www.safestate.org>.

Youth Alive
<http://www.youthalive.org>

National Crime Prevention Council
<http://www.ncpc.org>

Resources for Youth
<http://www.preventviolence.org>

MACSA... *(From page 5)*

around his past drug use and gang involvement, and fighting for custody of his daughter. He was working with a social worker to gain back the custody of his daughter when he was referred to MACSA for Gang Intervention, Male Responsibility, and Parenting Skills. Jaime was dealing with a serious crank addiction, but had been clean for three months.

With the help of MACSA's services, Jaime was able to remain clean and sober (18 months) and was granted full custody of his daughter. He has successfully disassociated himself from his gang lifestyle, and now stays busy through part-time employment at United Parcel Service Inc., attending Evergreen Community College, being a full-time father, attending AA/NA meetings, and serving as a role model for youth in MACSA's intervention programs.

Along with MACSA staff, Jaime presented to master's students at Santa Clara University on how to provide services to at-risk Latino youth. He has also presented at a Santa Clara County Youth Dialogue Conference on his experience being a teen father.

When Bertha was 13-years-old, she started talking to gang members and began identifying herself as a gang member (sureña). Before that, she didn't know anything about drugs or alcohol, but soon started using both. The violence quickly followed. With her fellow gang members, she began jumping rival gang members who entered her neighborhood. She had run-ins with the police stemming from her involvement in gangs, and experienced a lot of problems with her parents. She didn't care about school and told herself that she was not going to have a future, because she didn't care about her life.

At some point, rival gang members started going to her house and causing problems. She says, "One time, they wanted to jump my big brother because they thought that he was a sureño and then they popped the tires of his car and broke his windows. All this because I was always dressed in blue and throwing gang signs."

Bertha's mom enrolled her at MACSA's Academia Calmecac Charter High School. She didn't like it at first, but later came to realize the benefit she was gaining from being there. Bertha and her family received counseling services, and she learned about the consequences of gang banging. Now 15, Bertha acknowledges MACSA for helping to turn her life around. She is out of gangs, no longer uses drugs, understands the importance of education, and enjoys a much-improved relationship with her parents.



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Did You Know...?

In the year 2000, there were 3.9 million children in California between the ages of 11 and 18. By 2008, there will be nearly 5 million adolescents.

(Never Too Early, Never Too Late to Prevent Youth Crime and Violence, Little Hoover Commission, June 2001)